

Message Text

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47

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

ACDA-05 IO-11 /076 W

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P R 041714Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5902

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 0778

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: SIGNS OF CHANGING TIMES IN PORTUGAL

REF: LISBON 0690 (DTG 310923Z JAN 76)

1. TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ARE NOTEWORTHY AS SIGNS OF THE
CHANGING MILITARY ROLE IN PORTUGAL:

- RC REDUCES ROLE: THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL (RC) DID NOT MEET
ON FEB 2. INSTEAD, THE RC HELD TO ITS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED INTEN-
TION TO MOVE ITS MEETING SCHEDULE FROM A WEEKLY TO A BIWEEKLY
BASIS.

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- ARMY ADOPTS LOWER PROFILE: THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF

STAFF OF THE ARMY ISSUED A STATEMENT FEB 2 ANNOUNCING THAT THE ARMY WOULD NO LONGER AS A MATTER OF COURSE INTERVENE IN PROBLEMS ARISING FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM. THE STATEMENT SAID THAT, HENCEFORTH, ARMY UNITS WOULD ONLY ACT AFTER ALL OTHER REMEDIES -- SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING RESORT TO THE POLICE AND NATIONAL GUARD -- HAD BEEN EXHAUSTED, AND WHEN REQUESTED BY COMPETENT CIVIL AUTHORITY.

2. COMMENT: CPT SOUSA E CASTRO HAD DESCRIBED TO EMBOFF EARLIER THE RC'S INTENTION TO MOVE FROM A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS TO GUARANTOR OF DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER (REFTEL). DECISION TO REDUCE NUMBER OF RC MEETINGS, WHICH IN PAST HAD BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY CROWDED AGENDAS AND LONG HOURS, IS A CONCRETE SIGN THAT RC IS SERIOUS ABOUT REDUCING ITS POLITICAL ROLE.

3. MILITARY DECISION TO LEAVE POLICING OF POLITICALLY EXPLOSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM TO THE REGULAR PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES REFLECTS INCREASING DEPOLITIZATION OF ARMED FORCES.

4. RECENT STATEMENTS BY INTERIOR MINISTER AND HEAD OF PUBLIC SECURITY POLICE CALLING FOR "MINIMUM USE OF FORCE" AND THE ARMY FEB 2 DECISION SUGGEST SECURITY FORCES ARE TAKING TO HEART RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ARMA ON THE PROPER ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN CIVIL DISTURBANCES.
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